

AF Secretary, Chief commend Airmen for shuttle recovery efforts

by Secretary of the Air Force, James G. Roche and Gen. John P. Jumper, Air Force Chief of Staff

On Saturday, Feb. 1, our nation and the world lost seven courageous, talented individuals when the Space Shuttle Columbia Orbiter (STS-107) experienced catastrophic failure 15 minutes prior to landing at Kennedy Space Center, Fla. Among these brave astronauts were two officers from the Air Force family: Col. Rick Husband, mission commander, from Amarillo, Texas; and Lt. Col. Michael Anderson, payload commander, from Spokane, Wash.

On behalf of the men and women of the U.S. Air Force, we offer our deepest condolences to our Air Force family members Evelyn Husband and her children Laura and Matthew, and Sandra Anderson and her children Sydney and Kaycee. We stand together with all Americans in offering our prayers for the families, friends, and co-workers of those lost in this tragic accident. We will never forget their great contributions to our nation and the world.

While we are deeply saddened by this tragic loss, we are also very proud of the Air Force team that has tirelessly assisted in the response to this national tragedy.

Air Force Space Command units from Peterson, Buckley, and Patrick Air Force Base provided tracking data as part of the accident investigation. Tanker units from Birmingham, Ala., and fighter squadrons from Texas and Louisiana supported a number of search and recovery actions. We've also flown communications support out of Texas and Oklahoma and provided airlift support from McGuire Air Force Base. Barksdale Air Force Base provided part of the Initial Response Teams supporting the Texas Department of Public Safety in recovery efforts, and continues to function as the Federal Emergency Management Agency's Consequence Management Operations Center and NASA Shuttle Recovery Center. The Air Force family will continue to offer support to the astronaut's families, DoD, NASA, FEMA and state organizations.

We grieve for our friends and co-workers, but we also join the rest of the world in celebrating seven lives well lived and promise to continue to support the space program's noble mission of discovery.

May God bless the grieving families, our men and women in uniform, and the United States of America.

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